

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 453 529

CS 014 406

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TITLE Strategic Genericisms: Prompting Comprehension, Vocabulary, and Assessment.
PUB DATE 2001-05-00
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Reading Association (46th, New Orleans, LA, April 29-May 4, 2001).
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom - Teacher (052) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Educational Games; Educational Objectives; Elementary Secondary Education; Free Writing; Learning Activities; *Learning Strategies; *Literacy; *Reading Comprehension; Vocabulary Development
IDENTIFIERS *Authentic Learning; Collaborative Writing; *Content Area Teaching; Instructional Strategy Usage; Student Led Activities; Word Games

ABSTRACT

The presentation covered in this paper offers participants (i.e., teachers) an interactive, guided practice engagement with three specific instructional strategies appropriate for all learners, literacy strategies through which authentic writing and reading may be connected both to content and to the learners themselves as active creators of knowledge, not passive consumers of knowledge. The paper cites four objectives for participants, delineates three activities, and gives assessment intentions. It further explains the three activities: (1) Freudian Sentences: Prompting Content-Based Instruction; (2) Thematic Asterisks: Prompting Content-Based Knowledge Constructions; and (3) Collaborative Compositions: Prompting Content-Based Expression. The paper includes an addendum on games that serve as literacy tools. Contains a 10-item bibliography. (NKA)

Strategic Genericisms: Prompting Comprehension, Vocabulary, and Assessment.

by

Robert H. Williams, Jr. and R. Terry Graham

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46th Annual International Reading Association Convention

**Strategic Genericisms:
Prompting Comprehension, Vocabulary, and Assessment**

A Presentation for the Content Area Reading Special Interest Group (Mary Spor, Chair)

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Purpose:

This presentation offers participants an interactive, guided practice engagement with three, specific instructional strategies appropriate for all learners, literacy strategies through which authentic writing and reading may be connected both to content and to the learners themselves as active creators of knowledge, not passive consumers of knowledge.

Objectives: Successful participants will:

- 1). Know how to design and implement freewriting engagements that serve to preorganize and authentically connect vocabulary and content to learners;
- 2). Know how to design and implement one content-based and thematic instructional strategy that involves students as creators of their own knowledge systems and that may serve at any chronological point during instruction, from an introductory set to a concluding summarization;
- 3). Know how to design and implement a uniquely collaborative compositional and instructional set for purposes of structuring student writing without limiting the range and freedom of expression of that same writing;
- 4). Be aware of and understand the inherent assessments authentically embedded throughout all of the instructional strategies as described in 1,2, and 3 above.

Activities:

- 1). Freudian Sentences: Participants will respond in complete sentences to specific, content-based words;
- 2). Thematic Asterisks: Participants will complete a thematically organized graphic 'asterisk' and will design their own 'asterisk;'
- 3). Collaborative Compositions: Participants will collaboratively design and write a pedagogic statement.

Assessment Intentions:

We remain adamantly committed to students as creators of knowledge, not consumers. Thus, our most hoped for goal involves participants coming better to understand that authentic instructional strategies such as these we advocate today be both generically strategic while remaining student-centered and even student-led. For only through opening our instruction to student perspectives may we truly open our students to the content we wish to explore.

Agenda

Wednesday, May 2, 2:00 - 4:45 P.M.

Freudian Sentences: Prompting Content-Based Instruction (5 min.):

Rationale: In developing an instructional set through free association, i.e. carefully chosen words to which students respond in complete sentences, we gather an authentic sense of students' own linguistic depth and breadth, a sense of their communicative competence. Additionally, and particularly with an initially more to less defined audience, free association writing allows us to gather a broader sense of students' grasp of morphology, syntax, and overall comprehension. Finally, probably most importantly, we discover much about students' actual interests and life experiences to date with such introductory sets.

Thematic Asterisks: Prompting Content-Based Knowledge Constructions (15 min.):

Rationale: How are we to best assess what students know about what they don't know? Yet for students, the inverse becomes even more crucial for how are they to know what they don't know or are supposed to know about any specific content? In other words, metalinguistically, how are students and teachers to successfully query each other in order to access and accommodate one another in pursuit of their mutual needs and interests? Of course, for the teacher this primarily involves the students' interests and pre-existing connections to content; for the students, this primarily involves a teacher's instructional and content-based expertise per institutional curricular mandates. We believe the interactive word game we call Thematic Asterisks provides an enterprising opportunity for us, as teachers, to access and accommodate just such information. In constructing such 'asterisks,' both teacher- and student-designed, we discover much of what students typically have neither been asked

MEANING

EXPERIENCE

CREATION

CONVENTIONS

LEARNING

DISCOVERY

IMITATION

PRACTICE

LITERACY

INFORMATION

SYMBOL

SOUND

LANGUAGE

EXPERIMENTATION

FOCUS

DISPOSITION

IDENTITY

or were able to articulate. Certainly, as professional educators we must bear responsibility for creating structures wherein such articulation becomes not only possible, but routine.

Collaborative Composition: Prompting Content-Based Expression (20 min.):

Rationale: Seemingly, in most contemporary compositional settings instructors work to offer students maximal opportunities to find their own voices, their own words without the inhibiting layers and strictures of more traditional forms of compositional/essay expectations. Certainly, we as students felt just such inhibitions and likewise often railed against pre-determined topics and pre-determined formats that seemed - to us - to mostly interfere with expression and real honesty in both draft and final, edited products. Yet we also understand, both from first-hand experience and from anecdotal, student report and direct student observation the fallacies inherent in expecting relatively unsophisticated writers to produce coherent content without any real direction. Students do need structures or frames from within which to either freewrite or revise, draft material or edit. Thus, we offer just such a frame, a structure lacking that traditional stricture and equally importantly, offering students the maximum opportunities to honestly express their own views and opinions. Additionally, we offer, at least in some measure, a workshop-style design wherein students might at some point write collaboratively with colleagues yet still produce a relatively polished, intrinsically empowering document that truly reflects input from every single participant in the class, regardless of individual variations in linguistic or writing sophistication. Possibly most importantly, such a model gives everyone an equal voice, everyone a role in the chorus.

ADDENDUM

Games Kids Should Play

The learning of literacy conventions need not be a matter of students working harder or teachers working longer, but rather both smarter. Greater efforts on either's part adds only increased disenchantment and risk to literacy encounters. A more responsive, positive and rewarding result is likely to be realized in an environment where both student and teacher are mutually engaged and disposed to collaboration. The language logistics, remedial and recovery models are fraught with threats of failure for teachers and students alike.

Games are attractive literacy tools, common interests of students and teachers... at least beyond their classrooms. Board and digital games with great potentials for entertaining the advancement of literacy expectations abound. Thus the continued sales success of traditional board-card games, TV game syndications and the explosive proliferation of today's software enterprises.

Games serve naturally as pre-organizers, instructional sets and assessment tools. Pleasurable and applicable challenges for both the more and less able students provide rich classroom climates for discovery, collaboration and shared responsibility, listen and

watch as children, adolescents and, yes, adults 'play'. Their minds and spirits are fully occupied on the task, on the audience, on the content. True communicative competence is clearly revealed in the business of 'play'.

But this should not be surprising as 'play' is the respected study of many scholars. Why? Is it not 'play' that prompted the acquisition of speech, how the majority truly learned to read, and ultimately led to the joy of 'penning' our thoughts?

The abundance of games on boards or screens can and should become part and parcel of the study of literacy, the examination of numeracy, the exploration of nature and the celebration of culture.

"Boggle-ing" With "Asterisking"

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Vocabulary and Morphology Study?????

Prefixes, Bound / Free Morphemes and Suffices can be added to the left, center or right of respective grids or around the asterisk!!!!

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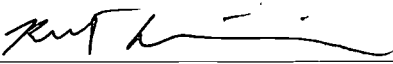
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